

**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Science and Technology**  
**Department of Biotechnology**

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**Monthly Cabinet Summary, January -2021**

**I. Important policy decisions taken and major achievements during the month:**

**(i) DBT Tableau on Republic Day Parade**

The Tableau of Department of Biotechnology “**India Fights Covid**” showcased during the Jan 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Republic Day Parade was awarded **first prize** amongst Ministries/Departments of Government of India. The Tableau exhibited India’s strength for “Atma Nirbhar Bharat” and also how well we are positioned to be a Global Manufacturing Hub for vaccine development.

**(ii) National Biotechnology Development Strategy**

To envision the goals for the entire biotech sector in the country be it education, research, entrepreneurship, industry development, a 5-year strategy with goals and implementation plan has been drafted with key stakeholder consultations. The draft is now open for public comments.

**(iii) National Mission Mode Program on “Nutritional Improvement of Digestible Protein Content and Quality in Rice”** has been recommended in the 8th Apex Board Meeting of the Department conducted on 29th January 2021. The program will be implemented in consortia mode with **six participating institutes** to identify and develop rice lines with digestible high protein and EAAs (Essential amino acids) for better human nutrition.

**(iv) Biotech Industrial Training Programme (BITP)**

To give more impetus to this programme, the Department has adopted apprenticeship model for implementation from this year. Linkages have been developed with Life Science Sector Skill Development Council (LSSSDC), New Delhi for selection of partnering industries. Entrance examination for the batch of 2021 was conducted on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2021 and first list of 317 candidates has been declared.

**(v) Himalayan Bioresource Mission**

In Consultation Meetings, it was recommended to sustainably utilize the rich bioresources of Himalaya for socio-economic development of the North East Region (NER) of India – as Himalayan Bioresource Mission. As part of this, a meeting was organized on January 27, 2021 to generate project ideas.

**(vi) Biotech KISAN**

Biotech-KISAN scheme is a farmer centric scheme that aims at connecting farmer with science for improving crop productivity and their livelihood. A Biotech KISAN Hub was supported in Jharkhand for enhancing the production and productivity of crops (Maize, Rice, Wheat, Mustard, vegetable crops), live stocks (Pig, Goat and Backyard Poultry) and value addition of maize for better price realization.

**(vii) Measures taken by DBT to address concerns related to COVID-19**

**a. Mission COVID Suraksha – The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission**

“Mission COVID Suraksha – The Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission” of DBT duly approved by Finance Ministry at a total cost of 900 crore for a duration of 1 year and is being implemented BIRAC – a PSU of DBT. Under the Mission, 18 proposals have been shortlisted for support.

**b. Partnerships for Accelerating Clinical Trials (PACT) initiative**

DBT has initiated the Partnerships for Accelerating Clinical Trials (PACT) and is working closely to strengthen capacities for facilitating phase III clinical trials of COVID vaccines in friendly nations in association with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Under the initiative, DBT-BIRAC is conducting online training sessions for Strengthening clinical trial capabilities for conduct of trials is in compliance with ICH-GCP guidelines. 2<sup>nd</sup> series entitled “Strengthening Clinical Trial Research Capacity in India’s Friendly Countries” was organised on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2021 with more than 100 participants from friendly countries (Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Vietnam, Bahrain, Oman, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kenya).

**c. National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)**

The Department participated in the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of STSC (Standing Technical Subcommittee) of NTAGI (National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization) on January 11, 2021. An Update of COVID-19 WG (Working Group) and discussion on Vaccine Confidence in view of Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) was held.

**d. Inauguration of CEPI Centralized laboratory at DBT-THSTI**

The Department scheduled a Video Conference (VC) Meeting, with Hon’ble Minister for Science & Technology, Health & Family Welfare and Earth Sciences, on January 5, 2021. The Hon’ble Minister inaugurated the CEPI (Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations) Centralized laboratory at DBT-THSTI (Translational Health Science and Technology Institute), Faridabad. Launch of DBT’s E-Book on S&T solutions for COVID-19 showcasing the initiatives undertaken by the Department for the mitigation of the pandemic and announcement of successful manufacturing of 100 lakh diagnostic kits by AMTZ (Andhra Pradesh Med Tech Zone), Vishakhapatnam was also made during the event.

**e. Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG):**

In the backdrop of reports of emergence of new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 in the UK and other parts of the world, **INSACOG** has been constituted inter-alia for genome sequencing of SARS CoV-2 for carrying out continuous Genomic Surveillance linked with Epidemiological Surveillance and clinical correlation of samples. The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee, comprising of Secretary DBT and Secretary, M/O HFW as Co-chairs, will provide support, guidance, and oversight the progress of the consortium.

f. Out of the 16 projects supported against the DBT-BIRAC joint call on COVID-19 research consortium, one of the project being implemented at has developed an IgG ELISA based on Spike Receptor binding domain. The initial version of the test has been transferred to Xcyton Diagnostics Ltd. The test will be useful for monitoring the IgG response after the infection and vaccination.

g. The City /Regional clusters have been established in a Hub and Spoke model to scale-up testing of COVID-19 samples in government institutions across the country. The Hubs are Government laboratories approved by respective Ministries /Departments (DBT, DST, CSIR, DAE, DRDO, ICAR etc) as per ICMR guidelines. So far 21 City /Regional clusters have been established and over 26.82 lakh samples have been tested.

To further enable testing access to rural India, the I-lab (infectious disease lab)-mobile lab for Covid testing launched by Hon'ble Minister on 18<sup>th</sup> Jun 2020 has performed about 12646 tests in the Faridabad region. Three more labs are expected to be deployed through participation of various State Governments. DBT has provided manpower support to all the hubs to continue testing.

(viii) The Department reviewed 34 applications in 197<sup>th</sup> and 27 applications in 198<sup>th</sup> meetings of Review Committee of Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) on 07<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021, respectively. These applications include Import/Export/Transfer/Receive, information items and Pre-clinical toxicity studies for Biopharma, and Import/Export/Transfer/Receive and Event selection Trial for Agriculture. After deliberation on each application, appropriate decision was taken by the RCGM.

(ix) During the month, 35 Institutional Biosafety Committees were constituted on IBKP portal.

(x) The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Expert Committee to Review & Update Risk Groups of Microorganisms was conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

(xi) **New projects funded based on RFP in any specific area**

**a. BIOTECH URJIT (University Research Joint Industry Translational) CLUSTER**

Department has invited proposals to create BIOTECH URJIT CLUSTER (University Research Joint Industry Translational Cluster) in the country. The call is open till 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021.

(xii) **Societal outreach of DBT**

**a. First Hub: Facilitation of Innovation and Regulations for Start-Ups And Innovators**

FIRST HUB is a facilitation unit set up by DBT at BIRAC to address the queries of Innovators. With regards to prevailing situation around globe, FIRST HUB sessions are being held every alternate Friday during a month to solve the queries of innovators. For the month of January, sessions for COVID-19 were conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021 and over 10 queries clarified. Representatives from CDSCO, ICMR, NIB, GeM, KIHT, BIS, DBT and BIRAC were available to take queries on Regulatory Pathways, Funding Opportunities, Public Procurement, IVD testing and validation, Standards and Specifications, Manufacturing and testing infrastructure support.

b. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> webinars in the series of IBSC awareness programme was hosted through Video Conferencing on 14.01.2021 and 28.01.2021.

(xiii) **Publications & Patents**

There have been **61** research publications and **7** patents filed by the Autonomous Institutes of the Department.

**(xiv) Technology developed/Commercialized through R&D projects supported by DBT as well as AIs of DBT: 1**

- a. DBT-NII has developed a novel candidate vaccine consisting of RBD domain of S1 protein of the corona virus. This protein has been expressed in E. coli and purified to homogeneity using NII patented refolding technology. The protein-based corona vaccine has been under process of technology transfer to Ms. Cadila Pharmaceuticals, Ahmedabad for regulatory toxicology and clinical evaluation.

**II. Compliance Report on Important Matters/Issues**

- (i) Important policy matters held up on account of prolonged inter-ministerial consultations: N/A**

- (ii) Compliance of Cabinet/Cabinet Committee decisions: N/A**

No. of COS decisions pending for compliance	Proposed action plan/timelines for compliance of COS decisions	Remarks
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- (iii) No. of cases of 'sanction for prosecution' pending for more than three months: Nil**

- (iv) Particulars of cases in which there has been a departure from the Transaction of Business: Nil**

- (v) Status of implementation of e-governance:**

Total No. of active files: 12137	Total No. of e-files generated during January, 2021: 384
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- (vi) Status of Public Grievances:**

No. of Public Grievances redressed during month: 22	No. of Public Grievances pending at the end of the month: 34
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- (vii) Information on the specific steps taken by the Ministry/ Department for utilization of the Space, Technology based tools and application in Governance and Development: Nil**

- (viii) a. Confirmation that the incumbency details of all posts in the Ministry/Department and its organizations falling under the purview of the ACC have been updated on AVMS:** It is confirmed that the incumbency details of all the posts in the Ministry/Department (both Autonomous institutes and PSUs under DBT) falling under the purview of the ACC have been updated on AVMS.

- b. Status regarding compliance of the directions of ACC. A paragraph on Cases in which the ACC directions have not been compiled with distinct heading:** It is confirmed that the directions of ACC are complied with.

- c. Status of cases where recommendations from PESB have been received but the proposals are yet to be submitted to the ACC Secretariat:** It is stated that the same may be treated as 'Nil'

- (ix) Status of Government e- Marketplace (GeM):.**

Procurement made by the department through GeM for the month of January, 2021 is Rs. 15,80,079/-